

Decision Record
for the
Dad's Creek Watershed Restoration Project
EA #OR110-00- 12

I. Decision: It is my decision to implement only a part of the proposed action and project design features identified in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Dad's Creek Watershed Restoration Project. Section A (EA p. 3) correcting drainage problems on existing roads, will be implemented this fiscal year. Section B will not be implemented under this decision at this time, but may be implemented at a later date, with a separate decision.

I received three comments from the public regarding this proposal. I will address their concerns in the Rationale section, below.

II. Rationale:

The No-Action alternative was not selected because the existing situation is contributing considerable sediment into Dad's Creek, and from there into Cow Creek, an important anadromous fisheries stream. If these drainage problems are not corrected, the situation will deteriorate and the adverse impacts to stream habitats and fish will increase. One comment letter suggested the sedimentation be quantified, but this is almost impossible to do with today's technology and with this kind of non-point source of the sediments. But it is clear that the current sedimentation levels are relatively high and getting worse.

Most of the comments received on this EA dealt with the riparian treatments, not the road work. These comments will be addressed when a decision is made on those riparian treatments.

One comment suggested that since the beneficial impacts will be relatively small compared with the size of the drainage, that the project should not be done. I agree that if funds were available there are other places where roads should be improved. But we are only able to accomplish projects with the funding levels we have. The BLM is committed to this type of restoration work and will continue to strive to improve conditions to meet the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) in the Northwest Forest Plan. The only practical way to improve conditions over large landscapes is to continue to attack problems as funding and opportunities present themselves. Abandoning this project because it may not have large, dramatic effects is not a valid argument.

One comment letter stated that improving road drainage does not comply with the ACS, but the letter does not provide any basis for that conclusion. The comment also contends that this road work does not comply with Judge Rothstein's decision, but again does not provide any argument why that might be the case. This letter later went on to contend that the project does not comply with Judge Rothstein's decision but it is unclear whether in this instance it is referring to the road work or the riparian treatments, or both. In any event, Judge Rothstein's decision dealt only with timber sales and has not been applied or extended to the type of road work being addressed in this decision. The EA clearly shows that correcting drainage problems on these roads will improve aquatic habitat conditions. Based on the analysis in the EA, I feel the road work being proposed is fully consistent with the ACS and was the type of work envisioned in developing the Northwest Forest Plan to address the effects of sedimentation into streams.

Another comment suggested that this project should decommission roads, rather than improve them. I agree that decommissioning unneeded roads also reduces erosion into streams, even though there are short term negative impacts associated with the ripping of the road surface and removing culverts. The BLM is decommissioning roads in a separate project addressed in EA OR-110-00-7 (Road Decommissioning in the Glendale Resource Area - FY 2000). But the project for which this decision is written is separate in scope and location, so it was analyzed in a separate EA. We will continue to look for opportunities to decommission roads to improve landscape health.

That comment letter went on to propose that road 32 - 7 - 15.01 be decommissioned rather than renovated. The ID team and I agree that this is a problem road that is causing serious environmental damage. Decommissioning that road would probably reduce that damage more than renovating it would. However, as discussed in the EA, this road is in a reciprocal right-of-way agreement area in which the adjacent private land owner has legal rights to access to their property (EA p. 2). In light of this comment, I revisited this particular situation with my staff. The possibility of decommissioning the road was seriously considered and was discussed with the private land owner. The land owner was adamant that the road was needed for continued management of their land and our staff agreed that there was not a viable alternative access that could be provided. Helicopters, as mentioned in the letter, can be used for logging lands where roads are not present, but in this case, would not be a sufficient answer to other management needs, including site preparation, tree planting, and fire control. As a result, I agree that decommissioning the road would reduce environmental damage, but in this case I am legally required to maintain the road; renovating it is the best option for reducing the environmental damage which is occurring.

This decision is consistent with the Record of Decision for the Medford District Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plan (RMP) dated April 14, 1995, as well as the Endangered Species Act, The Native American Religious Freedom Act and cultural resource management laws and regulations.

This decision notice will appear in the Grants Pass Daily Courier, a newspaper of general circulation in the project area, on August 11. The date of publication of the legal notice will constitute the decision date for purposes of protests and appeals under 43 CFR 5003. The decision will also be posted on the Medford District web site (<http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford/>). Protests must be filed within 15 days of the publication of the decision.

/s/

8/8/00

Lynda L. Boody
Field Manager, Glendale Resource Area
Medford District, Bureau of Land Management

Date

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
for the
Dad's Creek Watershed Restoration Project
OR-110-00 - 12

The proposed action for the Dad's Creek Watershed Restoration Project is described in the environmental assessment (EA) and it can be obtained at the Medford District Office or on the District web site (<http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford/>).

The proposed action is located within the Glendale Resource Area as described in the EA. The public notice of availability of this FONSI is provided through the Medford District BLM central registration recording system and newspapers in the area of the proposed action.

There are no floodplains, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, known hazardous waste areas, areas of religious concern, prime or unique farmlands within the project area. The project area does not qualify for wilderness designation. No significant adverse impact is anticipated to fisheries, lands and minerals. No cultural sites or special status plants are in the project area.

The estimation of impacts was based on research, professional judgment and experience of the interdisciplinary team. This method of estimating effects to the environment reduces the uncertainties to a level which does not involve highly unknown or unique risks.

FONSI DETERMINATION

I have reviewed the environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts not previously identified. I have determined the action described above will not have any significant impacts on the human environment beyond those already fully described in the Final Medford District Proposed Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement and that a supplemental EIS is not required.

/s/

8/8/00

Lynda L. Boody
Field Manager, Glendale Resource Area
Medford District, BLM

Date